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THE LADY OF THE HEAVENS.

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(Continued.)

"Yes, I know, sir," he answered, looking at Rachel as he was just in time to save your daughter's life here, as you said just now, Providence sent me. Well, good-bye, and don't think me wicked if I am very glad that I was disobedient, as I believe you are, too."

"Yes, I am. Good comes out of evil, sometimes, though that is no reason why we should do evil," the missionary added, not knowing what else to say.

Richard did not attempt to argue the point, for at the moment he was engaged in lidding far to the east. It was a very silent farewell; neither of them spoke a word, they only shook each other's hand and looked into each other's eyes. Then, muttering something which it was as well that Mr. Dove did not hear, Richard swung himself into the saddle, for his horse stood at hand, and, without even looking back, cantered away towards the mountains.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rachel presently, "call him, father."

"What for?" asked Mr. Dove.

"I want to give him our address, and to get his."

"We have no address, Rachel. Also he is too far off, and why should you want the address of a chance acquaintance?"

"Because he saved my life and I do," replied the child, setting her face. Then, without another word, she turned and began to walk towards their camp—a very heavy journey it was to Rachel.

When Rachel reached the wagon she found that her mother was more or less recovered, but that the attack of fever had left her so that she felt able to rise from her bed. Now, although still weak she was engaged in packing away the garments of her dead baby in a travelling chest, weeping in a silent, piteous manner as she worked. It was a very sad sight.

When she saw Rachel she opened her arms without a word, and embraced her.

"You were not frightened about me, mother?" asked the child.

"No, my love," she answered, "because I knew that no harm would come to you. I have always known that. It was a mad thing of your father to send you to such a place at such a time, but I knew that anyone else can hurt you who are destined to live. Never be afraid of anything, Rachel, for remember always you will only die once."

"I am not sure that I am glad of that," answered the girl, as she pulled off her wet clothes. "Life isn't a very happy thing, is it, mother, at least for those who live as we do?"

"There is good and bad in it, dear; we can't have one without the other—most of us. At any rate we must take it as it comes, who have to walk a path that is full of thorns and blood, walking when our path comes to an end, not a step before or after. But, Rachel, you are changed since yesterday. I see it in your face. What has happened to you?"

"Lots of things, mother. I will tell you the story, all of it, every word. Would you like to hear it?"

Her mother nodded, and the baby-clothes being at last packed away, she told of the box with a sigh, sat down upon it and listened.

Rachel told her of her meeting with Richard Darrien, and of how he saved her from the flood. She told of the strange night that had spent to her in the house, and of how she had marched up and down without sleep, she told of her vigil over the sleeping Richard at the daybreak, and of the dream that she had made, and she seemed to see him grown to manhood, and herself grown to womanhood, and clad in white skins, watching him lashed to the trunk of a giant tree, and the first arrow of guilt struck down the lanes of some mysterious forest. She told of how her heart had been stirred, and of how afterwards in the mist by the water's brink his heart had been stirred also, and of how they had clasped each other and wept because they must part.

Then she stopped, expecting that her mother would be angry with her and scold her for her thoughts and conduct, as she knew well her father would have done. But her mother only stretched out her thin hands and stroked the child's fair hair, saying: "Don't be frightened, Rachel, and don't be sad. You think that you have lost him, but soon or late he will come back to you, perhaps as you dreamed—perhaps otherwise."

"If I were sure of that, mother, I would not mind anything," said the girl, "though really I don't know why I should care," she added defiantly.

"No, you don't know now but you will one day, and when you do, remember that however long it seems to wait, you may be quite sure, because I who have the gift of knowing, told you so. Now tell me again what Richard Darrien was like while you remember, for perhaps I may never live to see his face, and I wish to get it into my mind."

So Rachel told her, and when she had described every detail, asked suddenly: "Must we really go on, mother, in to this awful wilderness? Would not father turn back if you asked him?"

"Perhaps," she answered. "But I shall not ask. He would never forgive me for thinking his duty. It is madness when we might be happy in the Cape, or in England, but that cannot be helped, for it is also his duty and ours. Don't make it harder on your father, Rachel, because he is a saint, and this world is a bad place for saints and their families, especially their families. You think that he does not feel that he is heartless about me, and the poor babe, and sacrifices us all, but I tell you he feels more than either you or I can do. At night when I pretend to go to sleep, I watch him groaning over his loss and for me, and praying for strength to bear it, and for help to enable him to do his duty. Last night he was nearly crazed about you, and in all that awful storm when the Kafirs would not stir from the wagon, went alone down to the river guided by the lightnings, but of course returned half dead, having found nothing. By dawn he was back there again, for love and fear would not let him rest a minute. Yet he will never tell you anything of that, lest you should think that his faith in Providence was shaken. I know that he is strange—it is no use telling it, but if I were to tell him he would go quite mad, and then I should never forgive myself, who took him for better and for worse, just as he is, and not as I should like him to be. So, Rachel, be as happy as you can, and make the best of things, as I try to do, for your life is all before you, whereas mine lies behind me and yonder," and she pointed towards the place where the infant was buried.

"Hush! here he comes. Now, help me with the packing, for we are to trek to the ford this afternoon."

CHAPTER IV.
 Ishmael.

It may be doubted whether any well-born young English lady ever had a stranger bringing her to the lot of Rachel Dove. To begin with she had absolutely no associates, male or female, of her own age and station, for at that period in its history such people did not exist.

In the country where she dwelt. Practically her only companions were her father, a religious enthusiast, and her mother, a half broken-hearted woman, who never for a single hour could forget the children she had lost, and whose constitutional mysticism increased upon her continually until at times it seemed as though she had added some new quality to her normal human nature.

Then there were the natives amongst whom from the beginning Rachel was a sort of queen. In those first days of settlement they had never seen anybody in the least like her, no one so beautiful—for she grew up beautiful—so fearless, or so kind. The tale of that adventure of hers as a child upon the island in the midst of the flooded torrent, spread all through the country with many fabulous additions. Thus the Kafirs said that she was a "Heaven-herd," that is, a magical person who can ward off or direct the lightnings, which she was supposed to have done upon this night; also that she could walk upon the waters, for otherwise how did she escape the flood? And lastly, that the wild beasts were her servants, for had not the driver Tom and the natives seen the spear of great lions right at the mouth of the cave where she and her companion sheltered, and had they not heard, that she called these lions into the cave to protect her and the other creatures? Therefore, as has been said, they gave her a name, a very long name that meant Chiefdom of Lady of Heaven, Inko-sazana-zooor for Zulu or Zulu, which we know as the title that people, means Heaven, and Udaye-Silwana or Sister of wild beasts. As these appellations proved too lengthy for common use, even among the Bantu races who have plenty of time for talking, ultimately it was shortened to Zoola alone, so that throughout that part of South Eastern Africa Rachel came to enjoy the lofty title of "Heaven-herd," the first girl, probably, who was ever so called.

With all natives from her childhood up, Rachel was on the best of terms. She was never familiar with them indeed, for that is not the way for a white person to win the affection, even the respect of a Kafir. But she was intimate in the sense that she could enter into their thoughts and nature, a very rare gift. We whites are apt to consider ourselves the superior of the dark-skinned as we are only different. In fact, taken altogether it is quite a question whether the higher sections of the Kafir peoples are not our equals. Of course we have learned more of them and our best men are their betters. But on the other hand among them there is nothing so low as the inhabitants of our slums, nor have they any of the vices which our vices are. In fact, as an assagai so much more savage than a shell? Is there any great gift fixed between a "chaka" and a Napoleon? At least they are not hypocrites, and they are not vulgar; that is the privilege of civilized nations.

Well, with these folk Rachel was intimate. She could talk to the warrior of his wars, to the woman of her garden and her children, to the children of that wonder world which surrounds childhood throughout the universe. And yet there was never one of these but lifted the hand to her in salute when her shadow fell upon them. To them all she was the Great Lady. They would laugh at her father and mimic him behind his back, but Rachel they never laughed at or mimicked. Of her mother also, although she kept herself apart from them, much the same may be said. For her they had a curious name which they would not, or were unable to explain. They called her "Growth-on-a-Grave." For Mr. Dove their appellation was less poetical. It was "Shout-er-about" or "Things-he-does-not-understand," or more briefly, "The Shouter."

As a name, he had acquired from his habit of raising his voice when he grew moved in speaking to them. The things that he did not understand, it may be explained, were not their minds his religious views, which although they considered them remarkable, were evidently his own affair, but their private customs. Especially their family customs, that he never weary of denouncing to the bewilderment of these poor heathens, who for their part were not greatly impressed by those of the few white people whom they came in contact. Therefore, with native politeness, they concluded that he spoke thus rudely because he did not understand. Hence his name.

(To be Continued.)

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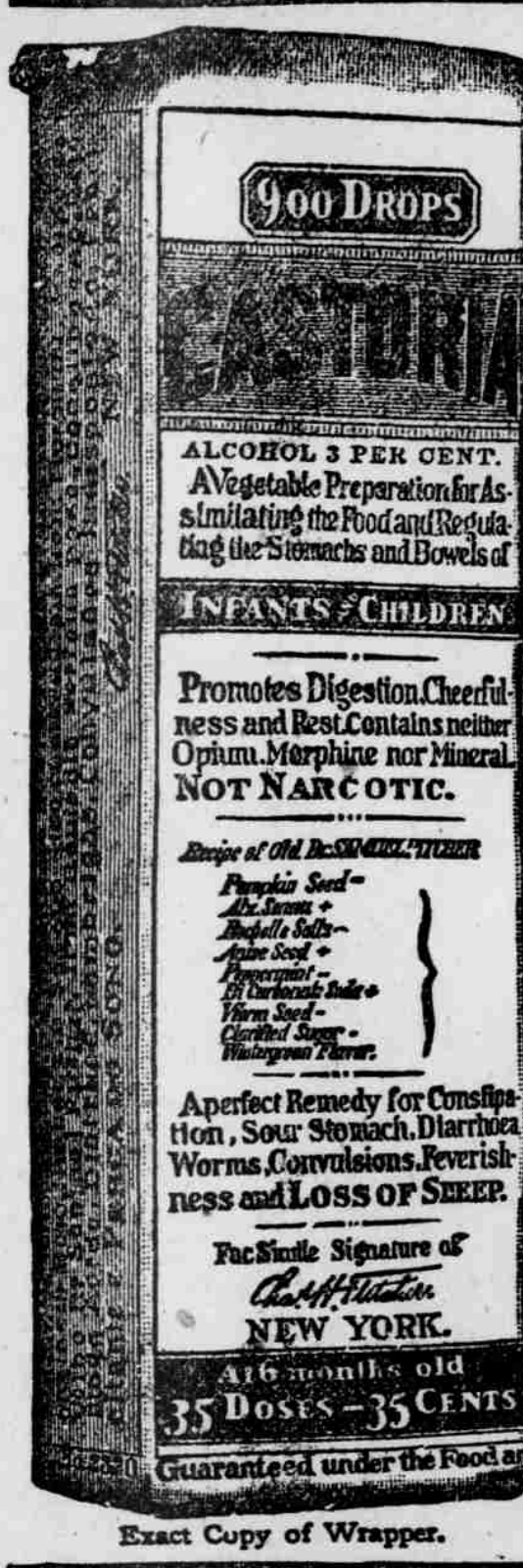
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